

Mental Health Prescription Program Improving Health Care for Utah Medicaid Recipients

A Utah Department of Health (UDOH) program is making a difference for Utahns with mental health problems. Over the past 12 months the UDOH's Behavioral Pharmacy Management Program (BPMP) has reviewed Medicaid mental health pharmacy claims for drugs to treat mental health conditions. BPMP has worked with hundreds of providers each month and has decreased unnecessary mental health prescriptions for both adults and children.

BPMP reviews prescription patterns for more than 130 different drugs to make sure they are used appropriately. When used incorrectly, mental health medications can lead to dangerous drug interactions and uncontrolled mental health problems. In monitoring Medicaid pharmacy claims, BPMP looks for doses that are too high

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or too low, similar drugs prescribed for a patient by more than one doctor, and forgotten refills. When any of these issues are found, selected

health care providers are sent a patient report and educational materials.



The health care providers also receive regular bulletins about special topics related to prescription drugs, such as mental health medication for children. Providers who continue to experience the same issues over time are offered a peer consultation to discuss prescribing practices.

“We are pleased that the UDOH notifies providers when patients have not filled their prescriptions,” says Mack Gift, Executive Director, Mental Health Association in Utah. “This allows providers to work with their patients to resolve any problems with the prescription and ensure that the patients receive the care they need.”

The UDOH reports positive changes are resulting from BPMP. Though overall treatment for mental health has been increasing, 5 percent fewer mental health prescriptions have been written for Medicaid patients who have been reached by the program. By reducing unneeded prescription drugs UDOH expects to save money.

Each month for the past 12 months the program reached more than 400 providers who see about 2,000 patients. Utah children are also getting help. About 70 of the providers reached each month are treating children. While fewer mental health drugs have been prescribed, BPMP is working to ensure that patients receive the medication they need.

“Appropriate prescription drug use is important to the quality of care Medicaid enrollees receive,” says Julie Olson, Director, Bureau of Managed Health Care, UDOH. “We are proud to see the program is working.”

Utah providers are responding to BPMP with enthusiasm. “Providers are using the information they get from the program to improve care and reduce costs,” says Michael Stevens, M.D., Director of Psychopharmacology Research, Valley Mental Health. “Providers receive information specific to their patients, allowing them to make the best possible clinical decisions.”

BPMP is a two-year project that began in 2004. Partners include Comprehensive NeuroScience, Inc., a national clinical best practices company, and the Mental Health Association in Utah. All funding for the project is provided by Eli Lilly and Company, in an effort to improve patient care.

The Utah Medicaid program, administered by the UDOH, covers families, children, pregnant women, aged, blind, and disabled people. To qualify, non-financial criteria must be met as well as income and asset criteria. A similar prescription review is done for all Medicaid clients who take more than 7 prescriptions per month.